

REMARKS

Claims 3-7 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nakabayashi et al. in view of Umemoto et al. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection because the cited references do not disclose or suggest the light guide plate having a curved light reflecting surface opposite the light exit surface. This rejection is also traversed because the cited references do not disclose or suggest that the curved light reflecting surface is formed to have the thickness of the light guide plate gradually decrease from the central part to the side end face. The first lighting element takes out light guided from the side of the first light source with higher efficiency as the distance to the second light source is smaller, and the second lighting element takes out light guided from the side of the second light source with higher efficiency as the distance to the first light source is smaller.

The Examiner asserts that Fig. 23 discloses a curved light reflecting surface, despite the fact that the description of that Figure states that “a flat portion 243 is formed on the top surface of the light guide member.” The Examiner also refers to Fig. 18 in further support of his position that a curved light reflecting surface is disclosed in the Nakabayashi et al. reference.

Fig. 18 of Nakabayashi et al. discloses stepwise slopes formed on the light guiding member 30 and a complementary plate 6C formed on the stepwise slopes. The stepwise slopes of the light guide member 30 is not curved as asserted by the Examiner, but stepped as the name describes. It is the complimentary plate 6C that appears to be curved.

Moreover, the stepwise slopes are formed on the light exiting surface of the light guide member and not the light reflecting surface, which is a flat surface parallel to a reflecting plate 4 and opposite the stepwise slopes of the light exiting surface. Therefore, Fig. 18 does not support the Examiner's position that the Nakabayashi et al. reference discloses *a curved light reflecting surface opposite the light exit surface*.

In the last Amendment, Applicants argued that it would not have been obvious to combine the cited references to derive the claimed first and second lighting elements having *irregularities evenly formed on the light reflecting surface of the light guide plate*, because the irregularities would interfere with or alter the angles of reflection in the grooves of the light guide member of Nakabayashi. The Examiner has rejected this argument stating that the irregularities as defined by the secondary reference would only provide "minimal destruction of the light direction of the Nakabayashi et al. device." The Examiner further states that there could be some "error in the angles of the slopes for a light guide plate of Nakabayashi to function with the fine irregularities disclosed in Umemoto." Applicants respectfully disagree that the cited references disclose or suggest the conclusions asserted by the Examiner, and request that the Examiner provide support in the references for his positions.

The light source devices, as now described in claims 3 and 18, recite that the curved light reflecting surface is formed to have the thickness of the light guide plate decrease gradually from the central part to the side end face. This arrangement enables the first lighting element to take out light guided from the side of the first light source with

higher efficiency as the distance to the second light source is smaller, and the second lighting element to take out light guided from the side of the second light source with higher efficiency as the distance to the first light source is smaller. (See Figs. 7 and 8 and corresponding descriptions in the specification.)

Neither Nakabayashi nor Umemoto discloses or suggests this feature as now described. As shown in FIG. 18, the light guide plate 30 of Nakabayashi is formed in stepwise slopes. The thickness of the light guide plate 30 decreases suddenly at the stepwise portion. Therefore, the thickness of the light guide plate 30 is not formed to decrease gradually in Nakabayashi. Also, the thickness of the light guide plate 203 shown in FIG. 23C of Nakabayashi is not formed to decrease gradually because the thickness of the light guide plate 203 decreases suddenly at the grooves 204.

Moreover, Nakabayashi does not disclose or suggest the feature that the first lighting element takes out light guided from the side of the first light source with higher efficiency as the distance to the second light source is smaller, and the second lighting element takes out light guided from the side of the second light source with higher efficiency as the distance to the first light source is smaller. For all these reasons, claims 3-7 are believed to be allowable.

Claim 18 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Nakabayashi et al. in view of Kashima et al. (US 5,735,590). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection for the reasons given above traversing the rejection of independent claim 3.

Claim 19 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Nakabayashi et al. in view of Umemoto et al. and Lin. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection because the cited references, alone or in combination, do not disclose or suggest that the light source device according to claim 19 has a feature that the first and second light guide plates are stacked to have the second light-emitting region which is an area arranged other than the neighborhood of the second light source and the neighborhood of the first light source one on the other, and the first light-emitting region which is an area arranged other than the neighborhood of the first light source and the neighborhood of the second light source one on the other.


Although Lin shows that the first and second light guide plates are stacked, it does not disclose or suggest the second light-emitting region which is an area arranged other than the neighborhood of the second light source and the neighborhood of the first light source one on the other, and the first light-emitting region which is an area arranged other than the neighborhood of the first light source and the neighborhood of the second light source one on the other, as now required in claim 19. Claim 19 is believed to be allowable for at least this reason.

Claims 9, 10, 12 and 13-17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Nakabayashi et al. in view of Umemoto et al. and other references. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection for the reasons given with respect to claim 3, from which the rejected claims depend, and because of the additional features described in these claims.

For all of the above reasons, Applicants request reconsideration and allowance of the claimed invention. The Examiner should contact Applicants' undersigned attorney if a telephone conference would expedite prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,

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